

Information for College Students: Giving Informed Consent

Overview

This document will provide you with an explanation of *informed consent* in relation to college counselling services. *Informed consent* means that you are given sufficient information so that you understand and can make appropriate decisions (such as giving consent) for the counselling service. In some circumstances, a student 13 years and older may provide *informed consent*; otherwise, the counsellor would obtain *informed consent* from a parent/guardian/carer.

Informed consent involves a private conversation between you and the Counsellor and covers the following.

Information

- a. College Counsellor's role and services they provide
- b. Confidentiality and its limits
- c. Nature of intervention
- d. Information sharing
- e. Record management
- f. Length of service and closure

Willingness to give consent

You don't have to provide consent. The Counsellor will discuss what may happen if you do not give consent so that you can understand how you could be affected.

You also have the right to withdraw your consent at any time in writing. You may think about the matter and ask questions before providing consent and you don't have to provide consent by a certain time. However, consent must be provided before the counselling service can be provided.

If you sign and date the consent form you give your permission for the Counsellor to work with you.

Parent/guardian/carer involvement

Parent/guardian/carer involvement is encouraged and can be important for ongoing change; however, parents/guardians/carers need to be aware of confidentiality and its limits within the counselling process. If you give consent to engage in counselling, then the Counsellor should reach an agreement with you as to how to involve your parent/guardian/carer.

College counselling role

College Counsellors work to support students to achieve academic success as well as social and emotional wellbeing. Counselling occurs when a student and Counsellor set aside time to explore concerns.

A college Counsellor can assist you or your parent by providing support and strategies to help at school and/or home. This might include support for; relationships with parents/guardians/carers, stress, grief and loss or significant changes at home. At school, you may require support with; goal setting, decision-making, learning difficulties, mental health issues, anger, self-esteem, resilience or negotiating friendships.

Confidentiality and its limits

Confidentiality is a very important part of counselling. It means that information you or your parent/carer provide to the Counsellor will generally not be disclosed without your consent unless an exception applies or unless in accordance with the School's Privacy Policy.

The exceptions that may apply

In accordance with professional responsibilities, the Counsellor may need to disclose details to other people within the School or external to the School in the following circumstances:

- The Counsellor has a reasonable belief that there is a risk to your health, safety or wellbeing or that of another person;
- there is a legal requirement to do so including as the result of a court subpoena or mandatory reporting provisions;
- it is necessary for the Counsellor to obtain legal advice

The School's privacy policy

Counselling is a service provided by Catholic Education Diocese of Rockhampton. All Australian health services are required to comply with legislation and regulations which protect the use and disclosure of personal information. The Counsellor and School complies with Australian privacy legislation and standards safe-guarding your information.

Catholic Education's full privacy policy can be accessed online at: <http://www.rok.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/Privacy-2014-04-V1.pdf>. The School makes every effort to adhere to the Guidelines for schools developed by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner. Information provided to the School will comply with Information Privacy Principles, and particularly principles 1 to 3, 10 and 11.

No person will have access to your information except to the extent required to deliver the counselling service. Examples of this may mean:

1. As you will have appointments during the school day, the school's duty of care obligations mean that your teacher and/or principal might be aware that the counselling is occurring. However, the information you/your parent provide during the counselling process will remain confidential (within the limits above);
2. In some instances, sharing of basic necessary information with school staff (eg: Learning support, Classroom Teacher, Head of House etc) may be needed to help with a more coordinated approach in working towards better learning outcomes for you. The information is for the purpose of gaining extra support and providing the most appropriate program for you. If you wish to provide information that you do not want shared with relevant school staff, you must inform the Counsellor in writing.
3. A third party may be present during sessions if required (eg: counselling supervisor or other school counsellor).
4. Other school counsellors or the Counselling Services Coordinator/Delegate may need to access your information, in order to: continue service if school counsellor is absent, support in critical incident situations when additional personnel are assisting, undertake supervision and quality assurance activities or to fulfil requirements of the law.
5. To administer our service, including the arrangement or changes of appointments, the support of counsellors, administration of counselling records database, the handling of feedback, data analysis, research, statistical and survey purposes.
6. To fulfil our administrative, legal and contractual obligations as an employer.

Record Management

When Counsellors see a new student, a digital file is opened which contains relevant information. As services are provided, case notes, reports, programs and plans will be added to the file. The purpose of collecting this information is to inform and record the Counsellor's work. The Counsellor is able to provide you information regarding record access. Records regarding students will be stored securely until the student attains the age of 25 years. Records will then be destroyed or permanently de-identified.

If you transfer to another Catholic college in the Rockhampton Diocese, the Counsellor in the new college can access this file. Please advise in writing if you do not wish for this to occur. If you transfer to a non-Rockhampton Diocese Catholic school, (e.g. private school, Education Queensland school or interstate) information will only be exchanged with your consent, except as otherwise required by law. All information collected and stored by the college Counsellor is the property of Catholic Education, Diocese of Rockhampton.

Length of Consent

When you give consent, you are agreeing to engage in counselling services at your current College. The Counsellor will speak with you to make sure you continue to provide your permission at the start of each school year or if a new concern is being addressed.

If you think you may want to withdraw your consent for counselling services, it is useful to first have a discussion with the Counsellor.

Closure

When counselling services are no longer required, a discussion will be held between you and the Counsellor. Counselling will stop and the referral will be closed. If at some time in the future, counselling services are required, you will need to make a new request for service and provide consent.

If you have any questions or require further discussion, please contact the Counsellor in your college.

Consent

In signing this, I acknowledge I have read and understood the information provided about the school counselling service as well as the limitations to confidentiality. I understand that once given, my consent will remain current for the school year or until it is withdrawn by me.

I, _____ (Student name) consent to the school counsellor providing services to me.

Signature: _____ Date: _____